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14 February 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Walt Rostow

SUBJECT : Assessment of the "Danang Document"

CIA has prepared the following assessment of the "Danang Document" in response to your request to Mr. Helms last night. You will have received, via the White House Situation Room, a full translation of the document.

1. Our examination of the document (in translation) suggests that it is probably a communication originating from Viet Cong Military Region Five. It is an assessment of the failure of the Tet offensive intended for subordinate authorities--possibly a tactical command center--and contains instructions for future operations. The original document, however, is still in I Corps, and US officials in Saigon state that they are unable at this time to make an accurate determination of its authenticity. Moreover, some questions remain unanswered as to date of document and circumstances of its capture.

2. The document appears generally to agree with other evidence gleaned from interrogations of prisoners taken during the Tet offensive and on what is known of the enemy's advance planning, that the Communists achieved less than they had anticipated. This evidence has suggested that the enemy believed they would meet greater success in sparking a "general uprising," although the extent to which they expected genuine popular support is still not clear. Prisoners of officer rank have stated that they believed most of the population would support them, but their own statements and documents from the pre-Tet period indicate rather strongly that the uprising was to be "motivated and organized" rather than spontaneous.

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3. Although the exact sequence in time of the "general offensive" and the "general uprising" has not been fully clear, there are strong suggestions in statements by other prisoners and in captured documents that the two were to be simultaneous, with the "uprising" at least being initiated during the Tet attacks. Certain troops or cadres apparently were specifically assigned to organize support, to begin in the form of public demonstrations. We know that such demonstrations were started during attacks on several cities in the central coastal area--including Tam Ky--but that they were dispersed by police. Some prisoners have linked the public's lack of cooperation to the failure of the attacks themselves.

4. There has been no evidence as to whether the Communists actually intended attacks throughout the country to be simultaneous or to take place on successive days. If valid, this document provides the first good indication that "N-Day" was intended to be nationwide and that the full impact may have been dissipated through poor coordination. It also raises the possibility that US bombing attacks successfully threw off the timetable in the Khe Sanh/DMZ area. Had the Communists genuinely expected to score complete successes in some areas, they almost certainly would have had to act everywhere at once.

5. The document, however, does not appear conclusive as to whether larger North Vietnamese units were to participate in the initial attacks, or were to be committed in follow-up efforts where success loomed promising. Neither does it make clear whether all North Vietnamese units or only some elements were to have been committed.

6. Although the document clearly suggests failure and the need for decision on a future course of action, it does not seem to rule out the possibility that the Communists had maximum and minimum goals, at least by area, nor does it necessarily indicate a "go for broke" effort. All of the future courses cited in the document point to continuing the struggle in Military Region Five, particularly in the urban areas. Although as might be expected, the dangers to morale and resources are highlighted, relatively strong assets are deemed still in place.

-2-

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7. We would concur with COMUSMACV's cautionary advice concerning both snap interpretations of Communist verbiage, especially in translation, and the possible relevance or significance of this document to the thinking and overall strategic planning of high-level Communist authorities in COSVN or Hanoi.

8. US officials in Saigon are endeavoring to clarify the circumstances surrounding the capture of the document and to establish as precisely as possible its authenticity.

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Senior Duty Officer
CIA Operations Center

-3-

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